

March 17, 2015

Re: Raised Bill #6765- An Act Concerning Interpreter Qualifications

Co-chairpersons Senator Moore and Representative Abercrombie, and members of the Human Services Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to write in support of Raised Bill # 6765 regarding interpreting qualifications.

The State of Connecticut lead the nation in the effort to insure that Deaf citizens received access to goods and services in the mainstream for decades. States marveled at the efficiency with which Connecticut interpreters were made available and were so impressed with the caliber of those Connecticut interpreters that Connecticut remained the standard for all other states to aspire. The Connecticut Commission on the Deaf and Hear Impaired [CDHI] was the first state agency established and served as the model for other states to emulate. Unfortunately, Connecticut is no longer able to lay claim to that level of achievement. The slow dismantling of CDHI during the previous two administrations has impacted the lives of many Deaf citizens and on interpreter service provision effectiveness.

Nationally, credentialing of interpreters has been examined and redesigned. Qualifications of “certified” interpreters have been upgraded. No longer does the Connecticut interpreter serve as the benchmark for working interpreters. Connecticut interpreters have new guidelines and standards to meet. Make no mistake, Connecticut has terrific interpreters working in the field but the new national standards are demanding .

Our Connecticut State Legislature, composed of astute individuals, has recognized the need to upgrade Connecticut standards by appointing the Task Force on the Interpreter Law. Interested and dedicated parties have worked diligently for 3 years to upgrade standards for Connecticut interpreters. The Interpreter Law is the result of such engagement. It is an impressive document and should be put into action.

There is however a shortfall with the Law. There are no provisions for funding the administration of the Law. No State Agency has stepped up to “adopt” the mechanism for “working” the Law. All involved with the Law agree that an administrative committee must be established. All agreed that this “committee” would be composed of volunteers authorized to oversee the Law, but who pays the postage? Who pays for office supplies? Where are they housed? Who pays the rent or storage space for the supplies? Who pays for the phone, computer use, etc? Who? Who? Who?

Without funding, the Law is useless and Connecticut remains with the status quo, not the leader in interpreting, the “follower”, and our Deaf population suffers. No one to monitor interpreter qualifications, professional work behaviors of field interpreters, etc.

Connecticut needs to step up as it did back in the ‘70’s. Fund at least one position and the essentials to run a program. The “Community” will provide the volunteer support.....it is imperative that the State locate a funding source. Three [3] years on premier work will have exemplary results if dollars can be located.

Respectfully,

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